

Federal Highway Administration

ENVIRONMENTAL  
POLICY STATEMENT  
1994

A FRAMEWORK TO STRENGTHEN THE LINKAGE BETWEEN  
ENVIRONMENTAL AND HIGHWAY POLICY

ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE

Today's environmental challenges are greater than ever before. Our Nation is working to grow economically and compete internationally while at the same time protecting and enhancing the environment. These goals are not mutually exclusive. Indeed a high-quality standard of living for all Americans in the future means we must protect the essential elements of our existence--our air, water, soil, and biological resources--and preserve our neighborhoods and community values. President Clinton believes that "America can set an example by achieving economic growth that can continue through the lifetimes of our children and grandchildren because it respects the resources that make that growth possible." This is the concept of sustainable development, which unites protection of the natural and human environment with economic well-being.

In response to Vice President Al Gore's National Performance Review (NPR), the Department of Transportation (DOT) intends to become a model transportation agency for protecting and enhancing the environment. Secretary Federico Peña has called for harmonizing transportation policy and environmental concerns as a major objective within the DOT. DOT agencies must become environmental leaders, clearly demonstrating sensitivity to the natural environment and to neighborhoods and communities in everything we do.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) first issued an Environmental Policy Statement (EPS) in 1990 to affirm the agency's commitment to environmental protection and enhancement. The principles embraced by the FHWA in the 1990 EPS remain valid:

- Full involvement of our partners
- Complete integration of environmental concerns
- Active protection and enhancement of our environment
- Vigorous research, technology transfer, and training
- Effective development and promotion of environmental expertise

We have accomplished much under these principles. We have developed regional interagency

agreements to merge the wetland permit and project development processes and emphasized shared decisionmaking. The FHWA's environmental training program has been reinstituted and environmental research has increased tenfold.

Yet there is still work to be done. The 1993 conformity regulations issued to implement the Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) of 1990 challenge all of us in the transportation and environmental sectors. We also must act on the Secretary's goal of "putting people first" to ensure that our policies and investments embrace the concerns of neighborhoods, communities, and society as a whole. And we must act on our obligation to foster environmental justice by ensuring that our transportation system does not unfairly affect any one segment of our society and that it equitably distributes benefits as well. To meet these goals, the FHWA must achieve an unprecedented level of collaboration and consensus-building with our partners.

The FHWA can be proud of its efforts in working toward a highway system that fits harmoniously within our natural environment and our neighborhoods and communities. Now we must strengthen our commitment to help shape an environmentally sustainable, intermodal surface transportation system.

<Signed>  
Rodney E. Slater

## PURPOSE

Since the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 1969, the FHWA has built a framework of policies and procedures to help meet its social, economic, and environmental responsibilities while accomplishing its transportation mission. This policy statement is a formal expression of the FHWA's commitment to the protection and enhancement of our environment.

The term "environment" as used in the EPS includes the natural environment, the built environment, the cultural and social fabric of our country and our neighborhoods, and the quality of life of the people who live here. This quality of life is enhanced not only by economic security and ample natural resources, but by enduring community values and thriving neighborhoods where all citizens have access to safe, comfortable, and efficient transportation.

With adoption of the EPS, the FHWA is committed to incorporating environmental stewardship into all policies, procedures, and decisions, not just those related to project development. Protecting and enhancing the environment, as well as the quality of life, requires a total, active commitment by all FHWA employees, especially program managers.

The FHWA, with its transportation, environmental, and community partners, will work vigorously to protect and, where practical, to enhance the natural environment and to preserve neighborhood and community values. To realize this goal, the following FHWA policy is established:

## FULL INVOLVEMENT OF OUR PARTNERS

Effective communication is critical to successful implementation of FHWA's transportation mission and environmental policy. This has become increasingly evident as we have worked with our partners to fuse the environmental and planning processes and to merge the FHWA, NEPA, and related project development procedures with other Federal, State, and local requirements. We must continually strive to communicate our commitment to protect and enhance the environment. We must increase our partnerships with private enterprise on infrastructure investments, including transit and Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) initiatives. Bringing together the multi-faceted and diverse interests in an open and cooperative process creates a synergy that will produce positive and effective solutions.

It is FHWA policy to:

Aggressively pursue improved communication and collaboration with our Federal, State, and local partners in the transportation and environmental communities, including other modal administrations within the DOT.

Seek new partnerships with tribal governments, businesses, transportation and environmental interest groups, resource and regulatory agencies, affected neighborhoods, and the public.

Ensure that those historically under served by the transportation system, including minority and low-income populations, are included in our outreach.

Actively involve our partners and all affected parties in an open, cooperative, and collaborative process, beginning at the earliest planning stages and continuing through project development, construction, and operations.

Ensure the development of comprehensive, cooperative public involvement programs during statewide and metropolitan planning and project development activities.

## COMPLETE INTEGRATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

For an effective, environmentally sound transportation system, the Federal-aid Highway Program and its projects must incorporate environmental considerations and neighborhood and community values and goals into every phase of transportation decisionmaking. But FHWA must practice environmental sensitivity on an even broader scale. Environmental objectives must be considered in every aspect of FHWA's organization and decisionmaking.

## Internal Operations

The FHWA must be a leader among Federal, State, and local transportation agencies in carrying out an environmental ethic that encompasses the consequences of all of our activities, internal as well as external.

It is FHWA policy to:

- Promote and facilitate use of ride-sharing, mass transit, bicycling, walking, telecommuting, alternative work schedules, and other alternatives to single-occupancy- vehicle use for FHWA employees.

- Ensure that procurement policies and specifications incorporate environmental goals such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and pollution prevention to the fullest extent practical.

- Purchase and recycle remanufactured products.

- Ensure that all of our facilities are operated in an environmentally responsible manner, through conservation of energy, water, and office products; pollution prevention; and disposal and recycling programs.

## Systems Planning and Programming

Environmental goals and impacts must be considered early in the development of transportation plans and integrated into land-use planning and transportation decisionmaking at the State, regional, and local levels.

It is FHWA policy to:

- Encourage and help State transportation agencies, MPOs, and local governments to take a leadership role in identifying and considering social, economic, and environmental concerns as early as possible in the development of transportation and land use plans and programs.

- Advocate broad-based public involvement by these agencies to generate consensus on transportation and land use solutions and the purpose and need for transportation investments.

- Work with our partners early in transportation planning and programming to ensure that FHWA-funded projects and programs contribute to sustainable community development that addresses present needs without compromising those of future generations.

- Promote and support innovative solutions to transportation and air quality problems through multimodal, interagency, and joint public-private efforts, including road and parking pricing strategies and ITS applications. Promote and foster travel alternatives to single-occupancy-vehicle use, including mass transit, bicycling, walking, telecommuting, and ride-sharing.

- Ensure coordination of transportation planning with State air quality planning, resulting in transportation plans and programs that conform to air quality implementation plans.

Promote and support watershed planning and the coordination of transportation planning with effective watershed planning to reduce erosion and non-point source pollution from highway construction, maintenance, and operations.

Support corridor preservation as a way to ensure early consideration of environmentally sensitive areas and to avoid or minimize future social, economic, and environmental impacts while providing for needed transportation facilities.

Ensure that major investment studies provide an early, intensive, and objective study of the impacts of alternative transportation solutions. Transportation alternatives considered should be based on public benefits and needs, environmental and cultural concerns, neighborhood and community values, economics, and other pertinent factors. In addition to new facilities and improvements to the existing system, such alternatives include transportation-system management options, demand management strategies, ITS applications, and the option of taking no action.

Support efforts of Federal, State, and local agencies to control noise emissions at their source, to encourage land use planning and control to prevent noise-sensitive uses from developing in high-noise impact areas, or to ensure that such development is planned to minimize adverse effects.

## Project Development

Environmental goals and impacts must be considered continually throughout all phases of project development (location, environment, design, right-of-way, etc.). Social, economic, and environmental issues must be considered equally with engineering, safety, and mobility issues in reaching project decisions.

It is FHWA policy to:

Provide continuity between the systems planning and project development processes so that the results of analysis performed during the planning stage, including project purpose and need, alternatives, public input, and environmental concerns, are brought forward into project development.

Ensure the merger of NEPA with other environmental review and decisionmaking requirements, such as Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Merger requires early and effective interagency coordination to ensure adequate description of the impacted resources, alternatives, and opportunities for mitigation. Determinations of compliance with other requirements should be integral to decisions taken during the NEPA process.

Use an interdisciplinary approach to identify and analyze the potential impacts of proposed transportation projects on the human and natural environments.

Ensure that NEPA documents capture and fully describe options to avoid, minimize, and

mitigate adverse impacts and, where possible, enhance the natural and human environments. Ensure that environmental commitments made during planning and project development and identified in NEPA documents are implemented during construction, maintenance, and operations.

## ACTIVE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF OUR ENVIRONMENT

It is a critical goal of the FHWA to administer the Federal-aid and Federal Lands Programs to fit in harmoniously with communities, neighborhoods, and project environs. Accomplishing this goal requires full compliance with environmental protection laws, regulations, Executive Orders, and policies.

To be an environmental leader in the transportation field, the FHWA must go beyond compliance and strive for environmental excellence. The widest possible range of both traditional and innovative measures to protect and enhance the environment must be pursued.

It is FHWA policy to:

Avoid, minimize, and mitigate to the fullest extent possible the adverse effects of transportation programs and projects on the neighborhood, community, and natural resources.

Seek opportunities to go beyond traditional project mitigation efforts and implement innovative enhancement measures to help the project fit harmoniously within the community and natural environs.

Ensure that Federal-aid and Federal Lands Programs and projects benefit all segments of society, including those who have historically been under-served and under represented. Improve accessibility for all persons, especially elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and the economically disadvantaged in both rural and urban areas. Consistent with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, all program and project actions and decisions must ensure that minority and low-income populations are not disproportionately adversely affected by transportation programs or projects.

Participate, to the fullest extent permitted by law, in funding mitigation and enhancement activities required by Federal, State, and local statutes and regulations for project-related impacts to the natural environment, neighborhoods, and communities.

Ensure that Transportation Enhancement funding provided under ISTEA is used to maximize benefits to cultural and natural environments and to contribute to more livable, sustainable communities.

Improve air quality through funding of projects under the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program of ISTEA. Ensure that these projects match the identified

transportation needs of individual regions, communities, and neighborhoods with solutions that reduce transportation-related emissions.

## **VIGOROUS RESEARCH, TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER, AND TRAINING**

Innovation through research and development is a major theme of the ISTEA and a priority for the DOT. The FHWA is committed to expanding environmental research and improving the transfer of new environmental technology to our partners in the transportation community.

It is FHWA policy to:

Conduct active and responsive research needed to advance state-of-the-art knowledge of transportation's linkage to and effects on the natural environment, neighborhoods, and communities. This includes pursuing research on the health and environmental effects of transportation on, and benefits of transportation for, minority and low-income populations.

Develop joint research and training efforts with Federal, State, and local transportation and environmental resource and regulatory agencies. Promote an interchange of training among these and other partners.

Expand current efforts to disseminate state-of-the-art information on environmental protection, impact evaluation, mitigation, and enhancement. To this end, use forums such as experimental and demonstration projects, technical conferences and training programs, electronic bulletin boards, and other technology transfer activities to promote the incorporation of research results into practice.

Seek, through research and application of sound management and "intelligent transportation" practices, ways to improve the transportation design and operational characteristics of existing and new transportation facilities from an environmental perspective.

Expand and improve FHWA's environmental training curriculum, and develop environmental training targeted at managers.

## **EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERTISE**

If the FHWA is to fulfill this policy statement and the DOT's theme of advancing transportation technology and expertise, our agency must have well-trained and professional personnel skilled in a broad set of disciplines. Emphasis must be placed on the environmental, social, and cultural sciences, and experts from the environmental staff must be involved in agency decisionmaking.

It is FHWA policy to:

Ensure environmental compliance and excellence at management levels.

Develop, enhance, and maintain environmental staff expertise, and encourage State transportation agencies and MPOs to do the same.

Utilize the Environmental Training Program as a development source of environmental specialists. Actively recruit from colleges and universities, with a special emphasis on Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other minority institutions, to bring the most promising candidates into the program.

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